1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

CHAPTER FOUR

Religious Beliefs and Practices

182 771 829 The lapse of many religious practices and the lessening of interest in those aspects of culture that we classify as religion were striking features of this dying society. Older informants rememered the time when there were ceremonial masks, the flute house, and other traits that are still found among certain tribes of the upper Xingú. Indeed, if it were not for Matiwana's unusual age, the Trumaí would be even more lacking in ceremonial knowledge. Yet there seems to have been little regret on the part of either the older or younger generations for this culture loss. They shrugged it off, saying that their grandfathers had had such [177] practices, but that they did not. This indifference is not too surprising, since much of their religion was borrowed from their upper Xingú neighbors not too long ago.[1]

771 105 Despite the decline in interest in the ceremonial cycle and the disappearance of certain religious traits, the main outlines of Trumaí religion were still observable in Quain's time. Shamanism was still practiced extensively, but it was simple both in form and supporting ideology. Ceremonialism was related to subsistence and curing. The shaman's individualized power resulted in a specialization of religious functions as did the individual ownership of ceremonial songs and dances. Some Trumaí, like old Matiwana, were better versed in the [193] religious rites than others, but they did not constitute a priestly class. While no one person interceded with the supernatural on behalf of the [182] whole village, the group ceremonials provided a focal point for social participation and village cooperation, and many of them were undertaken by the community for the benefit of all.

Shamanism

756 [184] The shamanistic art of curing was known and employed by nearly all the adult males of the village, and in this sense parallels the practices recorded among the Kamayurá by Oberg.[2] There is, however, a type

[1] Kamayurá ceremonial and religious life, much of which was once shared by the Trumaí, is discussed by Oberg (1953) and Galvão (1949, 1950). The extent of Trumaí culture loss can be roughly inferred from these sources and from the work of the earlier ethnologists.

[2] Oberg 1953, p. 60.